UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ NATO launches air strikes against Serb missile sites around Bihac; Secretary-General says action was necessary and approved by United Nations; Bosnian Government troops battle Bosnian Serbs inside safe area.

+ Security Council extends ONUSAL mandate for final period until 30 April 1995; expresses concern at partial implementation of important elements of El Salvador Peace Accords.

+ Secretary-General has meetings with Presidents of Italy and Egypt in Rome; signs Memorandum of Understanding on establishment of United Nations logistics base in Brindisi.

+ UNMIH advance team should be expanded as United Nations prepares to take over from multinational force in Haiti, Secretary-General says; implementation of Security Council resolution 940 proceeds smoothly.

+ Secretary-General recommends extension of UNDOF mandate for six months; says Force's presence is essential to maintenance of cease-fire between Israel and Syria.

+ General Assembly concludes consideration of Secretary-General's recommendations on agenda for development; selects Poland, Germany, United States and Burkino Faso to propose candidates for vacancies on Joint Inspection Unit.

+ States parties to Law of Sea Convention defer election of members of International Tribunal to 1 August 1996.

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The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) today conducted air strikes against surface-to-air missile sites in the Bihac area, according to a United Nations spokesman. Serb forces fired missiles at two British Harrier jets patrolling the area yesterday, and locked their radar on NATO reconnaissance aircraft flying over the sites today. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said that the NATO action was necessary, and that it was undertaken with the

approval of the United Nations, in accordance with the dual-key approach agreed upon by the two Organizations.

The Secretary-General, who is in Italy, stressed the need to pursue the political process in order to prevent an escalation of the conflict. It is also important to ensure that all necessary measures are taken to guarantee the protection of the United Nations forces in the former Yugoslavia, he said.

Meanwhile, fighting continued between Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serb infantry southwest of Bihac town, two to three kilometres inside the boundary of the United Nations-defined safe area, the spokesman said. The Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations, Kofi Annan, today briefed the Security Council on the latest developments in the area.

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The Security Council today decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) for a final period until 30 April 1995. It approved the recommendations by the Secretary-General in his report of 31 October regarding the Mission's implementation of its mandate. The Council also reaffirmed the commitment undertaken by the United Nations to verify full implementation of the Salvadorian Peace Accords. It took that action by unanimously adopting resolution 961 (1994).

The Council reaffirmed the importance of full and timely impelementation of all aspects of the Peace Accords, including the recommendations of the Commission on the Truth, and appropriate follow-up to the findings of the Joint Group for Investigation of Politically Motivated Illegal Armed Groups. It expressed concern that important elements of the Accords remained only partially implemented, and called on all concerned to cooperate fully with the Secretary-General's Special Representative and ONUSAL in their task of verifying implementation by the parties of their commitments.

The Council urged the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) to redouble their efforts to comply with the Agreement on a timetable for the implementation of outstanding aspects of the Accords. It asked the Secretary-General to report by 31 March 1995 on ONUSAL's fulfilment and completion of its mandate and on modalities for its withdrawal.

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Continuing his official visit to Italy, the Secretary-General today had a meeting with President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro. They exchanged views on Somalia, the peace process in the Middle East and assistance to the Palestinians, and the Naples Conference on Crime. He also met with Defence Minister Cesare Previti and discussed various peace-keeping issues, particularly the situations in the former Yugoslavia and Italy. They then signed the Memorandum of Understanding and Implementation Agreement relating to the establishment of a United Nations logistics base in Brindisi.

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Earlier in the day, the Secretary-General had a meeting with the President of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, who was on an official visit to Rome. Their discussions focused on the procedures to be followed for the withdrawal of United Nations troops in Somalia, including the Egyptian forces stationed at Mogadishu airport.

The Secretary-General was later scheduled to visit the United Nations Information Centre office in Rome, and to meet with the staff there. He would also receive a petition from Italian Parliamentarians regarding the establishment of a permanent war crimes tribunal.

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The advance team of the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) should be expanded to up to 500 members in preparation for the transition period when the Mission takes over from the multinational force, according to the Secretary-General. The team currently has a strength of 51 military, police and administrative personnel. In a report to the Security Council dated 21 November, he said discussions were underway between the United Nations, the Government of Haiti, the Government of the United States and other interested parties to assure a smooth transition. The issues being addressed included the training of the Haitian police, the timetable for forthcoming legislative elections, and the establishment of a secure and stable environment.

The multinational force has been operating smoothly in implementing Security Council resolution 940 (1994), with few incidents and widespread acceptance by the Haitian population, the Secretary-General noted. As the force has expanded its deployment, the military observers of the UNMIH advance team have enjoyed greater freedom of movement. No acts of intimidation or violence against the United Nations or other international presence have been reported.

The Secretary-General expressed some concern regarding the creation of the new Haitian police. While training had begun, time would be required for the interim police force to reach the strength necessary to enforce law and order. As soon as it was functioning effectively, UNMIH could assist the Haitian Government in sustaining the secure and stable environment to be established during the operation of the multinational force.

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In a report to the Security Council dated 18 November, the Secretary-General recommended that the mandate of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) be extended for six months until 31 May 1995. He said the situation in the Middle East continued to be potentially dangerous despite the present quiet in the Israel-Syria sector, and was likely to remain so until a comprehensive regional settlement was reached. In those circumstances, the continued presence of the Force, which was established in 1974 to supervise the cease-fire and Agreement on Disengagement between Israel and Syria, was essential.

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The Secretary-General went on to say that UNDOF had performed its functions effectively in the last six months, with the cooperation of Israel and Syria. He noted that the Governments of the two countries had agreed to the extension of the Force's mandate.

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Major donors, organizations and programmes should cooperate in supporting well-defined national development strategies arising from responsible democratic processes, the representative of the United States told the General Assembly yesterday. As the Assembly concluded its consideration of the recommendations of the Secretary-General on an agenda for development, he said such cooperation would be a basis for a "spectrum of support" by development assistance organizations.

Cuba said the agenda for development should not merely supplement the Agenda for Peace, but should articulate concrete proposals for the unpostponable development of the third world. The United Nations should focus on long-term development activities that went beyond the struggle against poverty and emergency assistance, he emphasized.

Also yesterday, the Assembly selected Poland, Germany, the United States and Burkino Faso to propose candidates for four vacancies on the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU).

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The ad hoc meeting of States parties to the Law of the Sea Convention has decided on a one-time deferment to 1 August 1996 of the first election of members of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. The Tribunal, whose seat will be in Hamburg, Germany, is the Convention's compulsory dispute-settlement mechanism.

The States parties decided that nominations for the International Tribunal would open on 16 May and close on 17 June, with a list of candidates to be circulated by the Secretary-General on 5 July. They also decided that a State in the process of becoming a party to the Convention could nominate candidates, who would remain provisional and would not be included in the Secretary-General's list unless the State had deposited its instruments of ratification or accession before 1 July 1996.

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